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**HB 6354 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET
RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING GENERAL GOVERNMENT**

**OPPOSE THE CREATION OF A "LEGAL AND ENFORCEMENT
DIVISION" IN THE OFFICE OF GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY BY
MOVING ATTORNEYS AND STAFF FROM THE STATE ELECTIONS
ENFORCEMENT COMMISSION, THE OFFICE OF STATE ETHICS AND
THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION COMMISSION**

My name is Bill Jenkins, I reside in the Town of Chaplin. I have been the Republican Registrar of Voters in Chaplin since 2006 and I have been a campaign treasurer for many campaign committees and a few political committees since 1996. I have also been a member of the Republican State Central Committee since 1997. I have had a great deal of interaction with the State Elections Enforcement Commission (SEEC) and the Freedom of Information Commission (FOIC) over the past 17 years.

I was and remain deeply concerned with legislation that was recently passed that created the Office of Government Accountability (OGA) which placed these once independent agencies under the control of someone who was appointed by the Governor. Fortunately, a compromise was reached before that legislation was eventually passed and signed into law that allowed the Government Accountability Commission to terminate the Executive Director of the OGA. This bill will remove those provisions and that is an extremely scary and dangerous proposal.

My biggest concern with parts of this bill (starting at Section 131 and going up to about Section 141) is from what I can tell, it moves staff and attorneys from the SEEC, the FOIC and the Office of State Ethics and creates a Legal and Enforcement Division under the OGA instead of leaving these professionals where they belong which is in their individual agencies. On the surface, we might think this is a good way to "consolidate" functions and staff to save money but the reality is no money is being saved at all, it's simply a matter of stripping the independent agencies of their resources and crippling them. The SEEC, the FOIC and the Office of State Ethics perform completely different functions from one another and have very little in common with each other. That's like stripping the scientists, engineers and assembly technicians from an aerospace manufacturer, a medical devices manufacturer and a toy manufacturer, putting them all in one OGA type organization and saying we now have a pool of

"technical staff" that can now handle all jobs and functions in all three companies which have nothing in common. This doesn't make any sense at all.

I'll be the first to admit that I'm not a big fan of the Citizens' Election Program (CEP) however, it's been law now for six years and if it's going to remain law, it absolutely needs to be supported. The SEEC has been administering this program with great success since it's inception in spite of reductions in its staff and budget in the past two years. If you're truly committed to continuing this program then crippling the SEEC by reassigning its staff to another agency is not the answer.

In the past few years, the SEEC has focused a small amount of staff to work directly with campaign treasurers and candidates to administer the CEP and gain first hand knowledge of how the campaign finance laws affect candidates, campaigns and treasurers. This has been a great help to the SEEC to advocate for changes in the current campaign finance laws to make the system more efficient and easier for those of us who use it. The SEEC also conducts audits of participating candidate's campaign finance disclosure documents to ensure that campaign funds are not misused and also has staff under its control to investigate not only campaign finance issues, but the conduct of primaries, elections and referendums as well. The way I read the Governor's proposal is that he is proposing to remove far too many SEEC staff personnel from their control and place them directly under the OGA and that is just plain wrong.

I personally see no need for an Office of Government Accountability and I strongly believe it should be eliminated. This would give agencies like the SEEC, the FOIC and the Office of State Ethics the freedom and independence they used to have since they were all formed. The creation of the Office of Government Accountability in 2011 has already hindered these agencies in carrying out their missions and the passage of this bill in its present form would be a travesty not only to these agencies, but to the citizens of the State of Connecticut.